





THE  
ROY E. CHRISTENSEN  
COLLECTION  
OF VICTORIAN BOOKS



AT  
BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

LIBRARY

741.942  
B38K  
1924

Assembled by David Magee

BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY



3 1197 22717 1615







*AN*  
*AUBREY BEARDSLEY*  
*LECTURE*







AN  
AUBREY BEARDSLEY  
LECTURE

BY

*A. W. KING*

*With an Introduction & Notes by R. A. WALKER  
and some Unpublished Letters & Drawings*



*R. A. WALKER*  
XVI THE AVENUE  
BEDFORD PARK, LONDON  
*MCMXXIV*



PRINTED BY STRANGEWAYS AND SONS,  
TOWER STREET, UPPER ST. MARTIN'S LANE, LONDON, W.C.  
OCTOBER 1924.

MADE AND PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN.



*CONTENTS*  
*AND*  
*LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS*

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION . . . . .	9
THE ART OF AUBREY BEARDSLEY: A LECTURE BY A. W. KING	23
FACSIMILE OF AUTOGRAPH LETTER 1889 . . . . .	51
IRVING AS MACBETH, PEN AND INK SKETCH IN LETTER . . .	52
A SUPPER TABLE, PEN AND INK SKETCH IN LETTER . . .	53
BEARDSLEY WITH A LEDGER AT A DESK, PEN AND INK SKETCH IN LETTER . . . . .	53
FACSIMILE OF AUTOGRAPH LETTER OF 4TH JANUARY 1890 . .	55
BEARDSLEY AS AN INVALID BY THE FIRE, PEN AND INK SKETCH IN LETTER . . . . .	57
WILLARD IN 'THE MIDDLEMAN,' PEN AND INK SKETCH IN LETTER . . . . .	58
A. W. KING AT HIS DESK, PEN AND INK SKETCH IN LETTER .	59
AUTOGRAPH LETTER OF 12TH JULY 1891 . . . . .	61
AUTOGRAPH LETTER OF 10TH AUGUST 1891 . . . . .	64
AUTOGRAPH LETTER OF 25TH AUGUST 1891 . . . . .	65
AUTOGRAPH LETTER OF 13TH OCTOBER 1891 . . . . .	66
AUTOGRAPH LETTER OF 7TH DECEMBER 1891 . . . . .	68
AUTOGRAPH LETTER OF XMAS 1891 . . . . .	69
FACSIMILE OF AUTOGRAPH POSTCARD, 5TH JANUARY 1892 . .	71
AUTOGRAPH LETTER OF 9TH DECEMBER 1892 . . . . .	72
FACSIMILE OF AUTOGRAPH POSTCARD OF 20TH APRIL 1893 . .	75

# CONTENTS

	PAGE
FACSIMILE OF AUTOGRAPH LETTER OF 27TH SEPTEMBER 1893 .	76
AUTOGRAPH POSTCARD OF 27TH NOVEMBER 1893 . . .	79
AUTOGRAPH LETTER OF 15TH MAY 1894 . . . . .	80
AUTOGRAPH LETTER OF 9TH DECEMBER 1895 . . . . .	81
AUTOGRAPH LETTER OF 18TH MARCH 1897 . . . . .	82
LA APPLE, CARICATURE OF HIS HEADMASTER, MR. MARSHALL, PEN AND INK . . . . .	83
LA DISCOURSE, CARICATURE OF MR. MARSHALL, PEN AND INK	84
LA LECTURE, CARICATURE OF MR. MARSHALL, PEN AND INK .	85
FLAVOURING THE APPLE TART, CARICATURE OF MR. MARSHALL, PEN AND INK . . . . .	86
LA CHYMIST, CARICATURE OF MR. MARSHALL, PEN AND INK .	87
A LITTLE CHAMBER MUSIC, PEN AND INK SKETCH . .	88
BOY FISHING IN SMALL AQUARIUM, PEN AND INK SKETCH .	89
VICTOR (? A FRENCH SCENE), PEN AND INK SKETCH . .	91
L'ALLEGRO AND IL PENSEROSO, PENCIL SKETCH . . .	93
VIOLINIST PLAYING, PENCIL SKETCH . . . . .	95
TWO VIOLINISTS PLAYING (? JOACHIM AND SARASATE), PEN AND INK SKETCH . . . . .	97
FOUR SKETCHES OF VIOLINISTS, PEN AND INK . . .	99
A VIOLIN, PEN AND INK DRAWING . . . . .	101
THE SLEEPING GOAT, CARICATURE IN PENCIL . . . .	103



*500 copies of this edition have been printed,  
of which 450 are for sale.*

*No. ....*





## INTRODUCTION

**A**RTHUR WILLIAM KING died on the 13th day of November 1922, at the age of 67. Among his papers were found a school sketch-book, with drawings by Beardsley, a few odd drawings and a series of sixteen very interesting letters from Beardsley ranging in date from 1889 to 1897. The following MS. lecture was also found in two copy-books, and, through the kindness of his nephew and executor, Dr. Harold King, I am permitted to publish it. It was delivered at the Blackburn Technical Institute, where he had held the post of Secretary from the time he left the Brighton Grammar School in 1890 until the date of his retirement about 1904.

The letters and drawings passed from an important London bookseller into the hands of the present owner, Mr. Gabriel Wells, the well-known book dealer and publisher of New York, to whose kindness and generosity I am indebted for permission to publish them here. They are so naturally linked with Mr. A. W. King's friendship with Beardsley and with his reminiscences of him as set out in the Lecture, that I

feel they all deserve preservation together and in a permanent form before being sold to keen, but possibly scattered, collectors in America and elsewhere. I therefore consider that fellow-collectors should be especially grateful to Mr. Wells for so kindly bringing them back with him from America and putting them at my disposal.

To deal first of all with the drawings; these consist of about 32 sketches and drawings on leaves of a school drawing-book, some sheets having several sketches on them, and some being very early and immature. One of them is in water-colour and represents a church with a pond in front of it. There are also ten out of the eleven drawings to 'The Pay of the Pied Piper,' published in the programme of the Christmas Entertainment of the Brighton Grammar School, December 1889. From these I have made a selection of eight typical drawings, comprising satires on his head-master, Mr. Marshall, illustrations to stories and odd sketches. They represent samples of the large quantity of schoolboy stuff he turned out between the years 1885 and 1889, and it must be admitted gave very little promise of the wonderful and exceptionally quick flowering of his beautiful art which took place within less than ten years. For this reason all the more honour is due to men like A. W. King and his form-master, H. A. Payne,



whose perceptions were keen enough to make them treasure these ephemeral scraps as a souvenir of the childhood of a genius whose first footsteps they were so instrumental in guiding aright.

Mr. King, in particular, shows himself in his lecture to have been a sympathetic and comprehending friend, and *in loco parentis* as a wise and careful tutor. I think he must have had his reward when he read Beardsley's account of his first interview with Burne-Jones, signing himself, still flushed with excitement, 'Your very affectionate pupil,' and when later, he read the generous, but true, words, 'If I ever succeed I feel that it is very much owing to you. At a time when everybody snubbed me, you kept me in some sort of conceit with myself.'

Dealing next with the letters, I have thought best to publish the complete set of sixteen, including several postcards. They commence with one written shortly after he left school, and on letter-paper of the Borough Surveyor of Clerkenwell, and they continue to within a year of his death.

The early letters still smack of the schoolboy, the calligraphy and phraseology are almost childish, and spelling mistakes are not infrequent. In a few quick years, however, his handwriting and his diction became assured. His early form of address, 'My dear Mr. King,' and 'Yours very affectionately,' became 'My

dear King' and 'Ever yours.' After all, before he was 22 years old, he was earning his own living, receiving considerable notice from the Press, and knew everybody and went everywhere. A. W. King's shy gosling had indeed grown into a fine swan.

The letters which are of the greatest interest to collectors are those which describe at length his first visit to Burne-Jones in 1891, and his letter of 9th December 1892, in which he tells how he 'struck out an entirely new method of drawing—fantastic impressions treated in the finest possible outline with patches of "black blot."' This was the final abandonment of the Burne-Jones manner, and the commencement of the real Beardsley genius, first seen in the *Morte Darthur* and then in *Salome*.

The reference to Messrs. Dent in this letter calls for some comment. It has been often said that Messrs. Dent only paid him £100 for all the drawings in the *Morte Darthur*, that he was underpaid, badly treated, &c. Here, however, we see the truth—or rather less than the truth. According to this letter he was to get £200 for about 400 designs, or, in other words, 10s. per drawing. Can any one in reason say that this was poor remuneration for a first commission to a young man—quite unknown—of under 21 years, and at a period when the value of money was twice that of to-day? It has recently been stated



that W. E. Henley received £100 per annum as consulting Editor to 'The Art Journal.' Beardsley, a much younger man of practically untried talent, was to receive £200 for 'a year's hard work.'

I have said that his letter was less than the truth, because I have seen the original contract with Messrs. Dent, in which it is provided that when the edition is exhausted, he is to receive an additional payment of £50. As the book, a large venture for Messrs. Dent in those days, sold very well, he in fact received this additional payment and pretty quickly too. The fee was therefore £250 for 400 drawings, not £100 as has so often been incorrectly stated.

The actual number of different designs has also been incorrectly given in many references. As I have personally counted them—by no means an easy task, when so many were reproduced more than once—I think the actual number may be of interest: he made 351 different drawings which were published in the first edition (1893-4), the great majority being, of course, chapter-headings which were small and easily and quickly done. Beardsley admitted doing 20 in one day. In addition to these 351, there were 10 chapter-headings not used in the first edition, and a few unpublished designs have turned up in the last 30 years (vide 'Some Unknown Drawings of Aubrey Beardsley,' 1923, R. A. Walker). This payment there-

fore of £250 was made for about 370 drawings only.

In fairness to Beardsley, however, it should be stated that he was engaged on this work for more than a year, and that he tired of the commission which was a very heavy one for so young and volatile a man. Still, Messrs. Dent had taken a great risk in employing so untried an artist, and they naturally had to complete the work (in parts) for their subscribers, and had to hold him to his bargain. The final achievement is a lasting credit to both publisher and artist. The effect of this commission on his subsequent art I will deal with in another place.

Continuing a survey of the letters, his little touches of pride are justifiable and very 'young.' He writes, 'I'm now practically on the staff of a new art magazine "The Studio;"' 'I'm going to have a grand show of my works at the New English Art Club, having been invited to exhibit by Fred Brown, the new Slade Professor, a great admirer of mine;' 'there is quite an excitement in the art world here about my "new method," and I shall be getting grand notices.' The pathos of it is that within five-and-a-half years of this happy, sanguine December midnight, he was dead. And yet, is it so really? Is not Beardsley alive to-day, as much alive as in those hectic decadent days of the 'Nineties'? I feel that Shakespeare was some-

times needlessly pessimistic and that he should have written,

‘The virtues that men have live after them ;

The bad is oft interred with their bones ;’

that should be Beardsley’s epitaph.

In a letter in September, 1893, he writes, ‘I have fortune at my foot, but I can tell [you] I have worked and work very hard for it.’ Considering he was then finishing off the Dent contract and also doing the Salome drawings, one can only marvel that the health of this delicate youth allowed him to produce such a magnificent *œuvre* for the delight of posterity. His little touches of criticism are often amusing and generally very mature for his age. He writes, ‘I am now 18 years old, with a vile constitution, a sallow face and sunken eyes, long red hair, a shuffling gait and a stoop.’ Before he was 18 he can write, ‘I have just been enjoying Daudet’s books immensely ; I can read French now almost as easily as English.’

As a devotee of the drama, which always intrigued him, he finds Irving ‘splendid’ in Macbeth, but he did not care for Ellen Terry. Sullivan’s music for Macbeth was poor. Of George Moore’s book, ‘A Mere Accident,’ he is not pleased, for ‘Realism—so called—does not seem to flourish on British soil.’ Even he himself was struck by the speed of his development, as in 1891 he writes naïvely, ‘The old drawings gave



me great hope, as there is a world of difference between them and my present pictures, and only two months difference in point of time.'

On contemporary journalism he wisely thinks that 'a good style—clear and unornate—is the rarest of things, not to be met with even in some of the best newspaper articles.' Early in his career he thinks of writing, for which he always had a hankering: 'I am anxious to say something somewhere on the subject of lines and line drawing. How little the importance of outline is understood, even by some of the best painters, it is this feeling for harmony in line that sets the old masters at such an advantage to the moderns, who seem to think that harmony in colour is the only thing worth attaining.' This, as a piece of art criticism of the late nineteenth century and from a boy of little more than twenty, is remarkable.

In his postcard of 5th January 1892, he writes, 'I think it would be better to etch the picture; and will let you have plate in a few days.' This sounds a curious statement, but I have confirmation of the fact from Mr. A. H. Pargeter, Beardsley's colleague in the Guardian Insurance Office. Whether it is the same plate, it is difficult to say, though the one he did whilst at the office was probably earlier. Mr. Pargeter says that it was done by one of the printers to the Guardian who brought Beardsley a plate on which he drew, and

which the printer took away to bite. The result, however, was so poor that Mr. Pargeter thinks Beardsley destroyed it. Probably the same fate overtook this plate, if it was a second one, and if indeed he ever did etch this plate at all.

'Lucian's Comic Voyage' referred to in his letter of the 9th December 1892, was, of course, 'Lucian's True History' which was privately published in 1894 by A. H. Bullen, and which had 16 illustrations by J. B. Clarke, William Strang, and Beardsley. Only two of them were by Beardsley, but a third was inserted loose in a special edition.

Beardsley had the delightful habit of putting little sketches into his letters. Those containing drawings addressed to Mr. King, are reproduced here in facsimile and really speak for themselves. The one of himself in a dressing-gown by the fire is exceptionally good, and the other one in the same letter of a very fierce individual at a high desk is meant to be Mr. King. I understand it is a fair likeness.

The remark in his postcard of the 20th April 1893 may cause uneasiness in the bosoms of some admirers of Beardsley. I think there is no need of alarm. It is doubtful if indeed he did go over to Paris with Oscar Wilde, and more probable that he accompanied the Pennells who were there at that time and introduced him to Whistler.

We come, finally, to the Lecture. This I have printed as it was written with the exception of some slips of the pen and clerical errors, which probably arose when the MS. was fair copied from a rough draft or from notes. In the margin of the MS. are consecutive numbers which refer to the slides used in the lecture. As this would be meaningless I have inserted in the body of the lecture and between square brackets [ ] the titles of the drawings which were used as illustrations, where neither the text nor the notes give sufficient indications. These can be easily found in *The Yellow Book*, *The Savoy*, or *The Early and Later Work*, though it is much to be regretted that the two Volumes of the latter have no proper index ; in some editions even, there is no pagination.

Mr. King's recollections will I hope be found interesting from many points of view. His humble claim as Beardsley's adviser and helper is amply proved by the letters. His statement about the use of tall lighted candles is the probable reason for Beardsley's fondness for drawing them. His opinion that Beardsley's art was more akin to the French is very true, and has not been appreciated enough by the critics. Mr. King's judgment on Beardsley's art is seldom at fault, and for that reason alone his lecture is worth reading, and the references to his drawings worth looking up.

Lastly, taking the letters and the lecture together,



they are valuable as stressing a side of Beardsley not often brought to light. They show his earnestness, his indomitable will, and his capacity for work. Certain aspects of the 'nineties have perhaps been over emphasised of late years. There is no doubt at all the age was vicious—what age is not? But the alternative to a certain looseness of morals is, unhappily, not always purity of life; but more often rabid, narrow hypocrisy, and tyrannous and bigoted suppression.

Beardsley and the little, short-lived group of the 'nineties were fighting, all unknowingly and in the wrong way, against the narrow sabbatarian non-conformity and hypocritical ignorance at the end of the Victorian era. In these more tolerant days, therefore, we should look with more sympathy and knowledge at the errors of the decadents.

This book happily shows Beardsley's virtues—the virtues that are always to be highly prized, his sincerity for his art—hid under the Whistlerian pose of the dilettant—his courage in spite of ill-health and his affection and constancy to his friends.

R. A. WALKER.



THE ART OF AUBREY BEARDSLEY

*With some Personal Recollections of him*





## THE ART OF AUBREY BEARDSLEY

THE subject which I have the honour on this occasion to introduce to you is one which I hope will be found not without interest, and I trust that at the close of the evening you will feel yourselves not altogether ill-rewarded for the time you have given.

Beardsley, whose portrait as a boy of eleven and a half you see upon the screen [*'The Sketch,'* 10.4.1895], was born on the 21st August 1872. He was a remarkably timid child, physically, but mentally he was very contradictory and humorously sarcastic, and had great powers of imagination. I have been told that he never in a sense learnt to read, but seemed to be perfectly conversant with the English language from the first moment of handling a book. He had considerable musical gifts, but he preferred the private enjoyment of his music. If any one entered a room where he was playing the piano, he forthwith stopped, and throwing himself into a chair commenced reading. As a child therefore he was allowed to go his own way in matters musical, and, greatly to the astonishment of his friends, he reached a marvellous degree of executive skill. Nothing would satisfy his friends but his public appearance as an infant prodigy, and, greatly to his annoyance, he was compelled to appear at a series of concerts in March 1883. In later days

it was an odd experience to listen to this wonderful boy discussing the philosophy of life, and referring in grandiose language, with a twinkle in his eye, to the time 'years ago' when he composed nocturnes and gave high-class London concerts, regretting the while that he had so wasted his time.

My first acquaintance with him was in January 1885. He came as a boarder to a large school in the South of England where I doubled the functions of Science Master and Senior House Master.<sup>1</sup> Returning from my holidays, I found amongst the 'new boys' this thin, talkative youngster, and at the moment when I first saw him he was discussing the qualities of Shakespeare's plays, contrasting in grand style the histories, the comedies, and the tragedies. At supper time the 'new kid' was the sole topic of conversation, and in schoolboy language, 'chaps swotting for the Cambridge senior' felt very small. They were reassured, however, the day after, for in classifying the forms it was found that Beardsley, notwithstanding the Shakespearean criticisms, knew not the multiplication table, and had contemptuously described it as entirely unnecessary, so long as you could count money, and more important still, had it to count. Alas for the Shakespearean critic! He was ruthlessly sent to the Lower School and told to stop chattering.

<sup>1</sup> Brighton Grammar School.



In the evening after tea my attention was irresistibly drawn to a most unusual silence in the covered playground, and with the curiosity natural under the circumstances I went thither to see what it meant. It is hardly necessary to inform you that Beardsley was the centre of an interested audience. He was giving a drawing-room entertainment chiefly consisting of a graphic delineation of his experiences in school, protesting frequently against the absurdity of a man of his years and experience being put with babies to learn tables and spelling. Of course, though thoroughly enjoying the situation, and feeling a good deal of sympathy with the boy, discipline had to be maintained, and that drawing-room entertainment was brought to a sudden end long before the programme was finished, or the resources of the entertainer were exhausted. I sent Beardsley to my sitting-room and told him to tidy up my bookcase and wait until I came. This was the beginning of a friendship which ended only with Beardsley's death.

The next slide is given as an illustration of the style of sketch which Beardsley got into the habit of dashing off at a moment's notice on all occasions.<sup>1</sup> During the years he was at school he must have drawn

<sup>1</sup> An unpublished pen-and-ink sketch of Arthur Roberts in 'The Old Guard,' a comic opera first performed in October 1887. The whereabouts of the original drawing is at present unknown. The drawing was made 1887-8.

thousands of these 'illustrated bits,' and they were not always kind. As Beardsley never participated in games, was a poor swimmer, and never went in for exams., he ceased to be a force in the ordinary sense of school life, and would have entirely lost touch with his school-fellows had it not been for the fact that I encouraged him to use his powers of entertainment in the right way. 'Why not give a Shakespearean recital like Brandram<sup>1</sup>?' said I to him one day. 'And why not try lightning sketches on a blackboard with chalk, or on paper with coloured chalks? And instead of giving annoyance to your victims by these innumerable sketches, use your talents to amuse and instruct without giving offence.' I think he appreciated my patience, and not long afterwards, as the 1887 Jubilee loomed in sight, he submitted the original of this picture to me [Jubilee cricket analysis], and I arranged for him to re-draw it in lithographer's ink, the use of which I explained to him, and the sketch was duly published in the school magazine.<sup>2</sup> You will readily understand that the original pen-and-ink sketch had more power of line than the later copy, drawn in a less manageable medium.

The bulk of Beardsley's spare time was spent in reading the English classics and in taking walks or

<sup>1</sup> Samuel Brandram (1824-1892). *Vide* Oxford Biographical Dictionary.

<sup>2</sup> 'Past and Present,' June 1887, Vol. XII., No. 2.

sitting with myself, during which we planned many great things. Some of them ended in small achievements, and some ended in dreams, but it is a pleasant recollection to me now to know that I had the happy thought of asking him to illustrate one of the books I was reading.<sup>1</sup> This he did remarkably well, and the place which Beardsley began to occupy in our little world was both useful and important, and made him as a boy a great deal happier in mind and healthier in body.

One of the many miscellaneous functions which fell to me at this time was the writing of the Prologue for our annual school entertainment. It was a consideration in rhymed pentameters, from the non-political point of view, of the topics of the year as they affected the British Empire in general and our school in particular. It consisted of several hundred lines, having grown from small beginnings, and was performed in costume by boys suited to the various characters. The sketch before you represents the first page of the 1886 programme, and was drawn by a friend of mine, a clever cartoonist.<sup>2</sup> Beardsley's name appeared this year for the first time, and his recitation of my humble lines secured for him the loud applause of three thousand not uncritical people. Naturally

<sup>1</sup> This book has been lost.

<sup>2</sup> The cartoonist was F. J. Stride. The performance took place on 20th December 1886.



Beardsley while at school was one of the permanent actors on all these occasions, but we were not content with this, and for the next year he was put to illustrate the book of an original comic operetta on the subject of the Pied Piper.<sup>1</sup>

And here are a few of his sketches. The ladies, not to be denied, petition the Council in person, and the Pied Piper boasts to the Beadle of what he can do. [The Pay of the Pied Piper.]

The Council assembling in Procession to consider the crisis, and the Children charmed by the Piper's piping follow, curious to see the effect on the Rats. The sketches are not without grace, and are more than remarkable in their fidelity to nature, with just the necessary touch of the cartoon spirit. For a youth who was his own teacher of drawing this sketch of the Children at the Wall is both well-drawn and charged with the right sentiment, and the Arrest of the Piper is very clever. The boisterous dignity of the Beadle is humorously shewn, and the surprised protestations of the well-intentioned Piper truthfully expressed. [The Pay of the Pied Piper.]

These 'racy little drawings' have been described as the first Beardsley drawings ever published, but

<sup>1</sup> 'The Pay of the Pied Piper.' Brighton Grammar School Annual Christmas Entertainment, 1888; performed 19th December 1888. Apparently it was not 'the next year,' and there is no record of his appearing in the annual entertainment for 1887.

though nearly, they were not quite, the first being the Jubilee Cricket sketches.

Beardsley's life at school was not a very good preparation for business, but the side life he lived with myself was an excellent preparation for the career which became his business. Moreover I believe that if I could have continued to have a daily control over this volatile child of nature I might have kept him free from some influences which were not always for his good. Beardsley left school in 1888 and was put in the office of the Clerkenwell surveyor,<sup>1</sup> as a temporary arrangement until a vacancy in an old-fashioned insurance office<sup>2</sup> was ready for him. I knew perfectly well that Beardsley was absolutely unfit for an insurance office.

His commencing salary had to be £80 a year, and like many a good useful London clerk, he would be expected to attend regularly at stated times for 30 or 40 years and after reaching a respectable salary retire on half of it as a pension. To commonplace clay this arrangement is useful, appropriate and satisfactory. But Beardsley was not commonplace, and in a regular correspondence which I had with him I did what I could to keep him on the right lines for a career as an

<sup>1</sup> *Vide* the first letter to A. W. King at the end of this book. This is no doubt the 'Architect's office' mentioned in Ross's life of Beardsley ('Aubrey Beardsley' by Robert Ross. Lane, 1909, p. 18.)

<sup>2</sup> Guardian Assurance Company.

illustrator of books. I had many letters from him and they were always full of sketches. The one on the screen is a sample of one of the earlier ones [Letter of 1889 at end of this book]. Later letters bear so strongly upon his subsequent career, and so many people of note have made claims to the discovery of Beardsley that I forbear in a public place to say much. It is sufficient to say that Beardsley consulted me in all the steps he took, and whenever I could get to London we were inseparable, but our talk was all of the future, and always of Art.<sup>1</sup>

The year after Beardsley left school I had planned a continental trip through France and before I could undertake it I found myself in the running for the position which I at present occupy. I had great hopes of what it would be possible to do for Blackburn and though I have worked hard, I have failed to reach my ideal. I see it still occasionally in dreams, but it is a long way off, and always recedes as I approach. However a change of scene came over the operations of Beardsley and myself. I came to Blackburn and Beardsley reached his stool in the insurance office. My holiday in France taught me as a certainty, what

<sup>1</sup> From the letters Beardsley wrote to Mr. A. W. King which appear at the end of this book it is perfectly clear that great sympathy existed between them and that Mr King had a great influence over him; however it is only fair to say that there were at least two other friends who helped him much at this time; Mr. Fredk. H. Evans and Mr. Aymer Vallance.

I had previously only imagined, that Beardsley's spirit was akin to the spirit of French Art, and if England would not respond France perhaps would. Beardsley was at this time a tolerable French scholar, but the new impulses I was able to set vibrating within him greatly encouraged him and for a while he read nothing but French authors.<sup>1</sup> I also advised him to join the Westminster School of Art where Fred Brown then was, and take up drawing from the Life. This Beardsley did, and meanwhile his friends were greatly alarmed at his performance of his duties in the insurance office. His sketches were numerous, and so were his mistakes.

In the summer of 1891 I was in London and brought back with me a few sketches by Beardsley. We had sat together at my hotel looking over his portfolio, and I at last said to him that it was his duty to take the bull by the horns and risk the consequences. He could leave the office if he liked, and shock his friends, but preferably I said he should for the present stick to his bread and butter, and make an opportunity of calling with his portfolio upon the publishers of illustrated books, and ask for something to do. At this time also Burne-Jones had thrown open his private Art Gallery for the use of the public on Sunday after-

<sup>1</sup> This interesting fact would account for Beardsley's illustrations to Molière, Daudet, Manon Lescaut, Contes Drolatiques, &c., some of which have been published.



noons.<sup>1</sup> Beardsley decided to visit Burne-Jones's place and take his portfolio with him lest, peradventure he met the prophet. And so it fell out, and on a bright sunny Sunday afternoon Beardsley sat in a leafy garden, with the artist of the Briar Rose, and received by apostolic succession a new inspiration for the work Nature had intended him to do.

The slide now upon the screen represents one of the drawings I brought back from London [Hamlet patris manem sequitur]. I tried to sell a few of the drawings, but the only purchaser I could find in Blackburn was your neighbour in these buildings, Mr. Richard Haworth.

This quaint representation of Hamlet was published by me in the November issue of 'The Bee' 1891, a little magazine run in connection with the Technical School.<sup>2</sup> Like many another good thing it was appreciated by the few, and unsupported by the many.

<sup>1</sup> As a matter of fact Burne-Jones at this date had closed his studio and art gallery to the public. *Vide* Beardsley's letter of 12th July 1891 at the end of this book. Mrs. Beardsley, the artist's mother, has told me that Beardsley's sister, Mabel, who was at this time about 20 years of age, had a quantity of beautiful red hair of the tint immortalised by Burne-Jones and Rossetti. Mrs. Beardsley thinks that Burne-Jones saw them from the window and that, struck by the beauty of her colouring, he ran after them, brought them back and showed them great kindness, although they were perfect strangers and without introductions. The elder artist may also have caught a glimpse of Beardsley's striking profile and the tell-tale portfolio under his arm.

<sup>2</sup> This drawing has been presented to the Department of Prints and Drawings at the British Museum by the late Mr. A. W. King.

My friend and colleague T. W. Neville was an active contributor to the columns of 'The Bee,' and of the rest I wrote most of it, in midnight prose and occasional snatches of early morning verse. When this Bee had buzzed long enough, and I began to be tired of finding the honey which it was not producing, it was killed and reverently interred. But the world will not let it lie undisturbed, its praises are constantly being sung, and I occasionally receive applications for copies, not of the complete work, not of my immortal verse, but of the odd number for November 1891. Art critics and artists of all kinds; an Italian nobleman; and other devotees of his shrine, not excepting sundry Yankees, parents of Beardsleyites over the water, are those who write to me, and I anticipate that the stock I have left may some day serve to slightly compensate me for the output of the past. At any rate 'Hamlet' published in Blackburn is the earliest published work in Beardsley's later style, and the copy of this number which I will hand round at the close must now be left to tell its own tale.

I now come to the first result of Beardsley's call upon the publishers. Dent & Co. whose name has become famous for the issue of charming reprints of masterpieces had at this time in view the issue of a sumptuous edition of Sir Thomas Malory's 'Morte d'Arthur,' with notes by Professor Rhys, and full-page

illustrations and borders by an artist if they could find one of the right temperament. It so happened that Beardsley in his portfolio had a most delightful drawing representing a scene in, I think, Tannhauser. It was Wagnerian with a touch of Japanese quaintness, and Beardsley was asked if he knew 'Morte d'Arthur.' As he had read the book, he was desirous of falling in with any possible chance, and readily consented when asked if he would submit a few border designs, initials, and a full-page drawing of a scene.<sup>1</sup> He duly submitted some drawings and Dents gave him his first substantial commission, offering him £200 for the illustration of the complete work.<sup>2</sup> Beardsley at once accepted this offer, and scarcely took the trouble to resign his position in the aristocratic and old-fashioned insurance office. As he said afterwards his own misery became another's happiness.

I now ask you to examine a few samples of the Morte d'Arthur designs. [Cover design for the Book.] First we have the cover which in a grey cream cloth with gold ornament is very characteristic. A full-page plate representing 'The Achieving of the Sangrael'

<sup>1</sup> This interview with Mr. J. M. Dent took place in the bookshop of Mr. Fredk. H. Evans, who introduced Beardsley.

<sup>2</sup> The contract was for a total sum of £250 payable by instalments. Although this sum to-day would hardly suffice to buy more than two or three full-page drawings, yet in 1892, as a first commission to an unknown artist of 20 years of age, it must have seemed a magnificent and prodigal sum.

opens Volume II. A tail-piece representing Merlin [Merlin in circle], and a page illustration with border shewing 'How the four Queens found Launcelot Sleeping.' This style of tree made its appearance in Hamlet, but here it is more geometrical as indeed is the whole picture, and will be found turning up again later. Notice the white garden wall and the footpaths. Though strictly geometrical the design is full of ease, and the border encloses, without oppressing, the story-telling power of the ensemble. The history of this border is interesting. Beardsley and myself were once greatly delighted by visits paid to the exhibition of Burne-Jones's Story of the Briar Rose. Those of you who have seen these pictures will remember the extraordinary interlacing of the branches of the Briar Rose, and the entanglement of the Knight therein.<sup>1</sup> Merlin taking the child Arthur contains the same tree and much of the same border, but nondescript heads are added and if looked at carefully a few surprises will reveal themselves. On the right of the tree trunk we have the subject matter of the story in a foreground, but on the left of the tree trunk there is a most delightful landscape with a lake, and a castle, and a distant

<sup>1</sup> The Briar Rose consists of four large paintings and four panels. Lord Faringdon had a room specially constructed to hold them at his country seat, Buscot Park, Berkshire, where they are skilfully let into the walls and look like frescoes. I believe the cost of them was £25,000, probably the highest sum ever paid for a series of paintings by a living artist.



country, the whole suggesting a most exquisite feeling for romance. [Merlin taketh the child Arthur into his keeping.]

Amongst other people doing business at Dents who saw these sketches were Joseph Pennell and Gleeson White. The latter gentleman was projecting a new Art Magazine, 'The Studio,' now the most successful magazine published, and he decided to invite Beardsley to design the cover. Here it is. [Cover design—unused.] The same foliage and the same flowers, and a fawn with the Pandean Pipes. How happily and naturally the scroll hangs upon the trees, and the leaning trunk in front as naturally sends its branches over the space required for the contents. For some reason or other Gleeson White would not have the fawn, and this is the cover as it appeared. [Published design.] The appreciation of Beardsley which appeared in the first number of the 'Studio' from the hand of Pennell set the art world a-talking, and Beardsley had an offer from America which would have paid him a hundredfold that which he was receiving from Dents. His contract for *Morte d'Arthur* however kept him at home, and he remained in his beloved London no longer unknown but a lion.<sup>1</sup> He enjoyed all the new delights of sudden fame but he held it at a distance and

<sup>1</sup> Beardsley hardly became notorious to the London public until the *Yellow Book* appeared in 1894, a year later.

enjoyed the fun of it all. The condescension of people who would not have previously acknowledged his existence amused him, and he gave full play to his sarcastic tongue, and not infrequently his pencil satirised the hollowness and wickedness of society, so called.

About this time he was asked to design a poster for the Avenue Theatre, that Cinderella of metropolitan palaces of pleasure. Beardsley entered upon this work with gusto for he had often desired to have a hand in a poster, as he felt within him the ability to produce the necessary arresting shock. Imagine the effect of this in livid bilious, sea-green tints. Nobody in London missed seeing this poster and for a while the Avenue prospered.<sup>1</sup> A poet of that time was compelled to parody 'The Blessed Damozel' and say—

‘The Yellow Poster Girl looks out  
From a green and purple Heaven ;  
She hath three fingers on one hand  
And the hairs of her head are seven.’<sup>2</sup>

With increased scope came increased power and Beardsley's marvellous rapidity of production staggered his friends. Max Beerbohm, the brother of Beerbohm Tree, represented Beardsley thus, and it is not far from

<sup>1</sup> Avenue Theatre Poster to advertise the play 'A Comedy of Sighs,' by Dr. John Todhunter, and 'The Land of Heart's Desire,' by W. B. Yeats, first performed 29th March 1894.

<sup>2</sup> 'Punch,' 3rd November 1894.

the truth for he was practically all brain.<sup>1</sup> The only exercise he ever took in the midst of his work was an occasional walk along Piccadilly by day, and a more frequent walk in the Strand by night. As he once described the Modern Babylon to me, 'London is the epitome of Humanity, and Final.' At this time his health though fair showed signs of decline, and he never looked better than in this picture [from 'The Sketch,' 10th April 1895]. Close application to his work, and the excitement of his successful life, brought on those troubles which before long were destined to master him. He always said 'I have not long to live, and therefore it must be work, work, work.' He was conscious of great powers, and was most anxious to illustrate some favourite books, chief among them 'The Shaving of Shagpat.'<sup>2</sup> But it was necessary to earn money, and therefore he had to do what was asked of him and not what he was personally inclined to.

Oscar Wilde wrote a play in French called 'Salome' and was anxious that Beardsley should illustrate it. He did so and some of the drawings are as wildly

<sup>1</sup> This silhouette has always been assumed to be by Beardsley himself. It appeared in the article on him in 'The Idler' for March 1897 by A. H. Lawrence.

<sup>2</sup> He made a drawing for this book which he sent to George Meredith, but it is now lost. In a letter to Mr. Fredk. H. Evans written at this time he puts a rough sketch of the drawing and promises to give the original to Mr. Evans if Meredith returns it. This letter is reproduced in 'Some Unknown Drawings of Aubrey Beardsley' (R. A. Walker, 1923. Illustration No. 9).

extravagant and improbable as they well could be. The critics grew grave and began to resent the manner in which this daring young draughtsman flouted the accepted canons of art and stereotyped methods of interpretation. This is *Salome* with the head of John the Baptist. The arm supporting the charger and the blood streaming therefrom have the tragic force of truth, and the delicacy of line in the vestment of *Salome* and its decoration are masterful, and unequalled by any artist in any age. The whole of the drawings in *Salome* were powerful in the extreme and completely captivated the leading artists of the continent. No artist before or since has shewn an equal power of line. Imitators of the black and white effects arose on every hand, but their work, though often good, lacks the touch of the Master.

The next period of Beardsley's artistic career is represented by his *Yellow Book* time. So many artists who were out of sympathy with the Royal Academy were successfully exhibiting through the New English Art Club, that a new spirit could hardly resist gravitating in that direction, and Beardsley soon found himself amongst them.

Elkin Matthews had just dissolved partnership with John Lane, and Lane, desirous of making a splash in the publishing world, gathered to himself all the literary and artistic eccentrics who were willing to



be published. George Egerton wrote 'Keynotes,' and Beardsley designed the cover and title. So successful was the high light matter of this strong-minded lady, that many other books followed in what began to be called 'The Keynotes Series.' To most of these Beardsley designed a title. Suddenly an Art and Literary Quarterly was projected, and Beardsley was appointed Art Editor. The programme included literary matter and illustrations, but the odd condition obtained that the illustrations and the literary matter had to have no reference to each other. I now show you a few of the illustrations from the Yellow Book. Those who know London by night will admit the truthfulness of this picture [Les Passades], and those who have dined late at a certain restaurant may have seen these waiters. The original of this is one of my favourite possessions.<sup>1</sup> The portico of the Lyceum does not suggest to the ordinary mortal much beyond a crush for a cab, but 'Lady Gold's Escort' as seen by the cunning eye of Beardsley includes an arrival and a study of character interesting, truthful, and amusing. Some of you perhaps have been to the Grand Opera on a Wagner night. Look at this! Full of power, is it not exactly like the groups of clever, ugly, rich Anglicised Germans and Austrians,

<sup>1</sup> 'Garçons de café.' This drawing is most unfortunately lost. It is supposed to represent some waiters at the Café Royal.

with a Jew or two thrown in [The Wagnerites]. Critics began to rave, and at last somebody more venturesome than usual said 'Beardsley couldn't draw.'

Under various names Beardsley issued in the Yellow Book these drawings, and paradoxical as it may seem, some of the critics of the Yellow Book advised the 'Decadent' artist to reform his manner and adopt the better styles of some of his co-contributors, little knowing that the co-contributors were himself. Yet the flower design in Andreas Mantegna is close akin to the Holy Grail.<sup>1</sup> The 'Woman in White' is a lovely bit of light and shade and would have satisfied Wilkie Collins had he lived to know it. This buxom damsel very suggestive of the other side of the silver streak may be accepted as likely to throw the uninitiated off the scent<sup>2</sup>; but this lady in tint, none other than the elegant Madame Réjane, ought not to have been attributed to another, when the three-line signature so often used by Beardsley was so very prominent in the corner. And yet critics missed their way.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 'Andreas Mantegna.' Yellow Book, Vol. III., by 'Philip Broughton' (Beardsley).

<sup>2</sup> 'From a Pastel.' Yellow Book, Vol. III., by 'Albert Foschter' (Beardsley).

<sup>3</sup> I believe this is an error, for 'Madame Réjane' was not first published under a pseudonym, but under his own name in The Studio, No. 62, May 1898.

A great deal of independent work came now to Beardsley, and I give you as a sample 'The Kiss of Judas' for the Pall Mall Magazine. It may not be altogether pleasing in *motif*, but it is a deft piece of draughtsmanship. And is it not easy to imagine that 'Judas who betrayed His Master' may possibly have been such a child. The ex-libris people went for Beardsley's work, and many book-plates in every possible variety of subject-matter and style were created by him.<sup>1</sup> Here is an example: [Ex Libris of John Lumsden Propert], note the candle so delightfully drawn. On this point I have a word to say later. My next slide is I think rather an interesting one, and marks the installation of Beardsley among the historic notabilities of England by Mr. Punch, who is not often wrong in his judgments. It is pure burlesque and very enjoyable. The sea-waves and the white cliffs of Old England are in the right spirit, and the exaggerated plumes of Britannia's helmet, and the ornamentation of the canopy curtain the sincerest

<sup>1</sup> As a matter of fact, only three designs can be definitely and certainly ascribed as Book-plates: those of John Lumsden Propert, Olive Custance (Lady Alfred Douglas), and John Pollitt (also known as Aubrey Beardsley's Book-plate). Beardsley's designs, however, lend themselves most appropriately for Ex-Libris, and numerous drawings have been adapted to make very charming book-plates. *Vide* 'Aubrey Beardsley as a designer of Book-plates,' by A. E. Gallatin, 1902 (Elkin Matthews), and 'The Book-plates of Aubrey Beardsley,' by Georges Derry ('Book-plate Booklet,' October 1919, A. Fowler, Kansas City, U.S.A.).

form of flattery.<sup>1</sup> This is the place to record the separation of Beardsley and John Lane. The Yellow Book had been a great success financially, but it died very soon after Beardsley left it. Some of the drawings Beardsley had daringly published were made the excuse, but it is not unreasonable to suppose that the other contributors grew tired of being left unnoticed, and human nature being what it is Jonah was thrown overboard, and had the satisfaction of seeing the ship not less troubled and at last wrecked.<sup>2</sup>

My friend Leonard Smithers, now of New Bond Street, entered into an arrangement with Beardsley to purchase all the drawings he cared to make, and it was a good thing for both of them.<sup>3</sup> They started The Savoy Magazine, and another burst of development in style by Beardsley followed. Beardsley contributed a poem called 'The Ballad of a Barber,' and accompanied it with this charming drawing, as a protest against the dictum of an art critic who had said that no composition was a work of art which had aggressive lines across it. The line of which the lady's left arm is a part is aggressive enough, and by no

<sup>1</sup> 'Britannia à la Beardsley.' Punch's Almanack, 1894-5.

<sup>2</sup> Beardsley was expelled from the Yellow Book immediately after the arrest of Oscar Wilde on the 5th April 1895. Although he had several drawings advertised to appear in the April number, they were excluded at the last moment.

<sup>3</sup> Leonard Smithers died abroad in poverty about 1906.



means unpleasing<sup>1</sup>: notice the eighteenth century candlestick on the mantelpiece, and the candlesticks of the next slide, 'The Scarlet Pastorale.' I have a pair of old Sheffield plate candlesticks, in the oval design, and often impressed upon Beardsley the beauty of these eighteenth century creations. I was fond, and am now, of reading by the light of two wax candles, and the play of light and shade which may be seen in a room not overlighted by candles is a very artistic thing compared to the over-all glare of gas and electric light. Beardsley learnt this, and to the last would work at night by candle-light. This 'Scarlet Pastorale' is weird, but not more so than 'Ali Baba,' whose tremulous hands were purposely made larger for dramatic expression [Ali Baba in the wood], and the tail-piece,<sup>2</sup> which deserves careful examination.

I venture to pause here for the purpose of giving you time to look well at both.

I desire at this point to submit an example of the many quaint conceits expressed in drawings by Beardsley. The lady on horseback is a true Beardsleyite, and the phrase from Chopin's Third Ballade is

<sup>1</sup> 'The Coiffing,' Savoy, No. 3. One of the most beautiful pen-and-ink drawings Beardsley, or any other artist, has ever made. Note the great power of the texture of the line from the finest series of dots to the hard thick line of the sash or bow worn by the seated figure, and yet nothing is too weak and nothing is too strong. The composition is perfect.

<sup>2</sup> This is one of the Bon-Mots grotesques, not a tail-piece, and is therefore mentioned very much out of date. *Vide* Bon-Mots of Smith and Sheridan, p. 23.

not badly illustrated by this equestrianism.<sup>1</sup> At the first concert this season of the Wolstenholme Society we had this item, and I was glad to find another artist in another medium possessed of the same impression. Beardsley's admiration for some of the early old masters was very great, and he loved to sit in the rooms of the Italian School at the National Gallery. Madonnas and religious subjects were not in great demand by his clients, but he not infrequently sketched a few for himself. In this Madonna and Child we have infinite colour suggested, and the Italianesque feeling is very striking [Christmas Card]. Imagine this picture after you have spent some time in the National Gallery, and it will glow with the old tints of the pre-Raphaelite days. Here is a reproduction of a sketch reminiscent of Hamlet; though of detail there is very little, a skilful touch makes the eye the centre of interest and the seat of expression.<sup>2</sup> 'The Fruit Bearers' is in quite another style, and should be examined carefully. The temple in the background is a triumph of light and shade, and the water and reflections therein are also very beautifully expressed. The

<sup>1</sup> This drawing is in pen-and-ink and sepia work. The values are beautifully rendered in the subtlest tones of wash which could only be adequately reproduced in photogravure. First published in half-tone in 'The Studio,' May 1898, and in photogravure in 'Some Unknown Drawings of Aubrey Beardsley' (R. A. Walker, 1923).

<sup>2</sup> The drawing, 'Hail, Mary,' is appropriately mentioned here, but of course it was made much earlier, and belongs to his Burne-Jones period.

foreground detail, in the original almost microscopic, is marvellous draughtsmanship. The Horned Hog on the terminal pillar of the balustrade and the ox skull are deft reminiscences of the Renaissance spirit, but the leading figures are like many other of this artist's subjects, the strange children of a strange imagination. We first saw Beardsley's work in a drawing associated with the Queen's first Jubilee, and we now see him at the time of the Diamond Jubilee, in the plenitude of his powers as an artist, but on the point of breakdown in his health. He began to grow somewhat less cheerful, and after a stay at Bournemouth he was removed to Dieppe. His letters were full of courage, but he began to realise that his days were numbered. Leonard Smithers was anxious to bring out 'The Rape of the Lock,' with illustrations by Beardsley.<sup>1</sup> Here are two,<sup>2</sup> and I think you will agree with the verdict of the art world, that here is the high-water mark of Beardsley's workmanship. I refrain from description, but you may profitably spend a few moments in careful examination [The Toilet of Helen].

In the next slide we have a further expression of

<sup>1</sup> 'The Rape of the Lock' is here mentioned, somewhat out of date, the drawings for it having been begun early in 1896, in which year it was published.

<sup>2</sup> Although he mentions two, he only reproduced on the screen 'The Rape, drawing.

his consciousness of his growing limitations. Here, tied by a shortening cord, ankle to ankle, and himself to a Fawn-Term doing duty as a solitary stake in a vast space, we have what Beardsley called a 'Foot-note.' Notice the pen, typifying by its great length the amount of work he felt himself capable of doing, but a power outside his own will had said 'Thus far.'<sup>1</sup>

In the next we see him representing himself in bed. The same beautiful black and white, and the same exquisite cunning in detail. Notice the corner pillow of the bed. Waking from his dreams, and returning to the world of reality he may well say, 'By the gods Jumeaux, all the monsters are not in Africa.'<sup>2</sup> Again we have a study on the same lines: 'The dying Pierrot visited by his friends.' [The Death of Pierrot.] The helpless hand, the corner of a dressing-table, the costume on the chair, the vallance falling away at a corner of the canopy, the lines representing the folds of the curtains, are as masterful as ever. But never saw I the hollowness of the earthy earth, and the friendships

<sup>1</sup> It is almost permissible to interpret the allegory as spiritual and not physical; Beardsley's wonderful spirit bound and tied down to earthy passions typified by the Terminal of Pan. When this drawing was used as the cover design for 'The Second Book of Fifty Drawings,' it was modified, and the Rope and the Terminal were cut out.

<sup>2</sup> The actual title to the drawing is 'Par les dieux Jumeaux tous les monstres ne sont pas en Afrique,' and a correct translation should be—By the 'Twin Gods,' &c. Yellow Book, Vol. III., 1894.



it can offer, better portrayed than in the contrasts between the grimaces of soulless health and the self-surrendering detachment of the face of death. Yet more than one prominent art critic pronounced the last picture impertinent and this one meaningless. It is at any rate well that some of us occasionally think for ourselves. 'The Return of Tannhauser to the Venusberg' is another cry, and the blackness and hollowness of the forest and the world, with the thorny entanglements and difficulties in attempts to escape them, point to the fact that the mind of the artist had satisfied itself,<sup>1</sup> and could now say as in the next slide, 'Hail and Farewell.' [Ave atque vale.]

At the end of 1897 Beardsley's illness had begun to be very serious. A weak chest had by this time developed mischief past arrest, and in a last attempt to preserve life he was hurried away to Mentone. His powers as a creative artist however remained, and at the desire of his publisher he set to work to illustrate 'Volpone.' Ben Jonson was one of his favourite dramatic writers and I submit the cover and two illustrations from this work. He was not able to work with his pen as usual, doubtless being a little impatient, and used a brush, which in previous days

<sup>1</sup> Surely the subject and the drawing itself point rather to the lifelong but unsatisfied cravings of the artist for love or passion or for the unattainable ideal. In the collection of Mr. J. M. Dent.

had only been an occasional implement of his craft.<sup>1</sup> The two illustrations from the body of the work which I select are two initial V's and the work in each is charmingly characteristic. A distant landscape appears in each, below to the right of the Bacchus Term, and through the window of the next subject, where a gorgeously apparisoned elephant, with ears of undue dimensions and a very expressive eye, toils beneath an overflowing vase of fruit.

I have now kept you unduly long, and must bring my story to an end. Not that the end has been reached. The illustrations I have given you this evening have been chosen for the purpose of showing the growth of Beardsley's Art work. I might easily have submitted others, but they would tell the same story—great natural gifts and enormous industry. 'The astonishing fertility of his invention and the amount of work he managed to produce were inconceivable,' and none of his drawings exhibit any sign of haste. He of course had his enemies. All artists who are original are opposed, but the verdict of the discriminating is the verdict of posterity, and I hope the discriminating amongst you will allow me the enjoyment of that satisfaction which comes when we find our views accepted. From the first I hoped to live

<sup>1</sup> The Volpone drawings are in pen-and-ink and pencil, and the brush was not used.

to see Beardsley's gifts developed and appreciated, but these successes came sooner even than my optimism expected, and the end of all came all too soon. Beardsley never left his room after January 25th, 1898, and on the 25th of March<sup>1</sup>, in his 26th year, his wonderful spirit withdrew itself from his frail body, as he himself had portrayed in that charming tailpiece of *Salome*. The End was inevitable, 'though we paint an inch thick to this favour we must all come.'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Robt. Ross in his *Biography* (Lane, 1909) gives this date, which is incorrect. He died on the 16th March 1898.

<sup>2</sup> 'Let her paint an inch thick, to this favour she must come.' *Hamlet*, Act V., Scene 1.

[1889.]

51

District of Clerkenwell and a part of Islington.

District Surveyor's Offices.

E. Layzell

ARCHITECT & SURVEYOR

21st 18 3/4 St. John's, E.C.

3, Wilton Square, W.C.

32 Cambridge Street, S.W. 188

My dear Mr King

Thank you very much for  
your postcard. I called for the book  
(Scotts Poems) & got it all right. It is  
beautiful edition. I went to Macbeth  
last week. I was delighted with  
it I was very frightened for some  
time that I should not see you & I  
was truly thankful he recovered  
in time. He was splendid in it &  
thought, ~~but~~ I didn't much care for  
Ellen Terry in some scenes.

Sullivan's Music was a great  
disappointment, what did you  
think of it?





You should have seen Irving in the  
 murder scene, it was tremendous,  
 I am very sorry you saw Vizen tho!  
 I dare say he was very good.  
 There been to a good many theatres  
 this holidays.

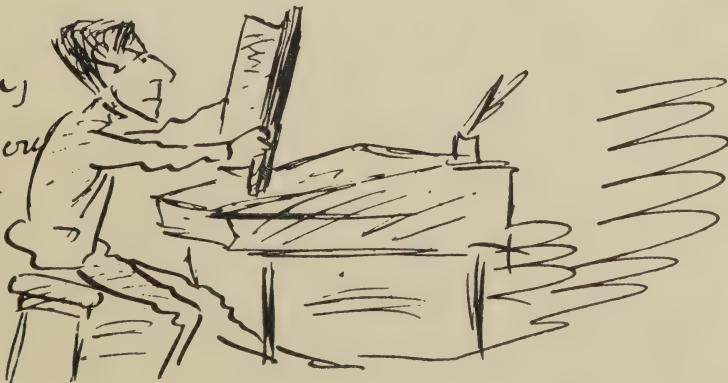
I am very glad the new Mabrou  
is pleasant I suppose that means  
some respectable suppers for you



Whom in your room this term?

I have been "In Business" since new  
years day I don't exactly dislike but  
am not (as yet) frankly attached  
to it My work however is not hard.

Here am I  
Cooking very  
wise and  
an  
Empty  
Sedger.



Is the football ~~dept~~ kept up this term?  
 & have we any chance for the cup. I  
 suppose a good many of the first eleven  
 have left.

I wonder if you are able to have any  
 entertainments this term I wish  
 I was back to help with some

I hope you are quite well  
 Please remember me to Mr Sampson  
 & Mr Sam.  
 with affectionate wishes

I remain

Yours very affecly

W V Beardsley

As your prologue was much  
 admired here

32 Cambridge St.  
SW.

11 ~~Feb.~~ Jan. 90.

My dear Mr King

I should like to get a line from you. Would have written before myself but have been so dreadfully ill. Some weeks ago I had a bad attack of blood spitting. I went to see Dr Symes Thompson who said I was in a shocking state of health & wondered how I had existed in such a ~~shocking~~ worn out condition. My lungs luckily are not diseased. But my heart is so weak that the least exertion brings on bad haemorrhage.



My Xmas has been kept on  
 flops & over basins. Of  
 course I had to leave the  
 Insurance Office. I read  
 all day. I have just been  
 enjoying Daudets books  
 immensely. I can read  
 French now almost as easily as  
 English

---

I have been doing a little  
 writing. My first attempt  
 has been successful Vide  
 "The Story of a Confession Album  
 in Tit Bits. They sent me  
 £1. 10 0 for it



You were quite right  
about Willard. "The  
Middleman was the last  
thing I saw". No  
theatres for me now for  
a long while.



How do you like the  
Technical Schools?





Hope you are quite well

Remain  
Yours very affly

at Beardsley

[*Postmark 12th July 1891.*]

Please excuse this wordy,  
long letter

59 Charlwood St  
SW

A. W. King Esq.  
The Secretary  
Technical Schools  
Blackburn.  
Lancs

My dear Mr. King

I do not beleive (sic) I can have written to you since I left school. The truth is I have had next to no news. A Short time back I had a playlet performed at the Bghton Pavilion, with some success, also a monologue. Yesterday (Sunday) I & my Sister went to see the Studio of Burne Jones; as I had heard that admittance might be gained to see the pictures by sending in one's visiting card. When we arrived however we were told that the Studio had not been open for some years & that we could not see Mr. Burne Jones without a special appointment. So we left somewhat disconsolately.

I had hardly turned the corner when I heard a quick Step behind me, & a voice which said 'Pray come back I couldnt think of letting you go away without seeing the Pictures, after a journey on a hot day like this.' The voice was that of Burne Jones; who escorted us back to his house & took us into the Studio, Showing & explaining everything. His kindness was wonderful as We were perfect Strangers he not even knowing our names.

By the merest Chance I happened to have some of my best drawings with me, & I asked him to look at them & give me his opinion.

I can tell you it was an exciting moment when he first opened my portfolio & looked at the first drawings 'Saint Veronica on the evening of Good Friday' 'Dante at the Court of Con Grande de la Scala.'

After he had examined them for a few minutes he exclaimed 'There is no doubt about your gift, one day you will most assuredly paint very great & beautiful pictures.'

Then as he continued looking through the rest of them ('notre dame de la lune,' 'Dante designing an angel,' 'Insomnia' 'Post Mortem' 'Ladye Hero' &c &c) he said 'All are full of thought poetry & imagination. Nature has given you every gift which is necessary, to become a great artist. I seldom or never advise anyone to take up art as a profession, but in your case I can do nothing else.'

And all this from the greatest living artist in Europe. Afterwards we returned to the lawn & had afternoon tea. Mrs Burne Jones is very charming. The Oscar Wildes & several others were there. All congratulated me on my success, as 'Mr Burne Jones is a very severe critic.'

During tea B. J. spoke to me about art training. 'I will' he said 'immediately find out the very best school for you, where two hours daily study would be quite sufficient for you.' 'Study hard, you have plenty of time before you, I myself did not begin to study till I was 23.'

'You must come & see me often & bring your drawings with you. Design as much as you can your early sketches will be of immense service to you later on. Every one of the drawings you have shown me would make beautiful paintings.'

After some more praise & criticism I left feeling, in the words of Rossetti 'A Different crit'ter.' We came home with the Oscar Wildes—charming people—.

I feel now doubly, how helpful & benificent (sic) your

Kindness to me at school has proved. If I ever succeed I feel that it is very very much owing to you. At a time when everybody snubbed me, you kept me in some sort of conceit with myself. I shall never forget our evenings together in the old room, one day they may bear real good fruit.

I (sic) line from you would be a very great pleasure. I am so anxious to hear all about you & your doings, so please write

I am now 18 years old, with a vile constitution, a sallow face & sunken eyes, long red hair, a shuffling gait & a stoop.

The drawings I showed Burne Jones were those done within the last few weeks, as prior to that I don't think I put pencil to paper for a good year. In vain I tried to crush it out of me but that drawing faculty would come uppermost. So I submit to the inevitable.

I am sure you will wish me all success in years to come.

Nash I met the other day—he draws no longer.

Clark (do you remember him?) will I think step to the part one day; he is a good sort.

I am your very affectionate pupil

AUBREY VINCENT BEARDSLEY

[*Postmark 10th August 1891.*]

59 Charlwood St  
SW.

A. W. King Esq.  
Covent Garden Hotel  
Covent Garden  
W C.

My dear Mr King

Have just got your postcard. It will alas be impossible for me to see you tomorrow morning as I am due in the City at 9.30. I am still in the Fire Office,—my art Study being nocturnal. You may guess from this that I have some real hard work in front of me, for the next 3 or 4 years at least.

When I leave the Office tomorrow, say about 5 30 I will call at the Covt Gdn Hotel, on the spec of finding you there, but dont put anything off on my account. Of course I am always at home every evening but I dont want to drag you out to these outlandish parts, when you are in London for so short a time & probably very busy.

I'm afraid I shant be able to bring you many of my drawings as the bulk of them are in the possession of Mrs Russell Gurney, from whom I may expect some substantial help.

I was delighted to get a letter from you : and to hear of yr visit to London

I am

Your very affectionate

AUBREY V. BEARDSLEY



[*Postmark 25th August 1891.*]

59 Charlwood St  
SW.

A W King Esq  
The Secy  
Blackburn Technical Schools  
Blackburn

My dear Mr King

I have just received your letter & enclosed. It is really awfully good of you to take so much trouble over my Sketches. By all means accept 10/- for the Hamlet if it is offered (By the way please imitate my signature at the bottom of it—*A/B*)

I have 2 fairish designs by me 'The Triumph of Joan of Arc' & 'The Litany of Mary Magdalen' I will send if you think you could dispose of them. I will also try and get the Gurney drawings.

Burne Jones letter I enclose herewith. It doesn't prove much, except that I know him & that he has taken an interest in my work.

I am looking forward very much to a sight of the Bee, which you say you are sending me

In haste

From your very affectionate

AUBREY V BEARDSLEY

59 Charlwood St

SW.

13 Oct : (1891)

A W King Esq.,  
Blackburn Technical Schools  
Blackburn.

My dear Mr King

Thanks very much indeed for the Bees. I admire the general get up immensely. Your hand is noticeable distinctly throughout. You must excuse me writing a long letter this time as my eyes are very weak & inflamed just now, & I am anxious not to overtire them. I eventually selected the 'impressionist Academy as my School of art. I certainly make decided headway, & it will not be so very long before I get into the life class—However if my eyes are going to give me any serious trouble I may have to give up the pencil for some time.

I went to see Watts the other day. He is a disagreeable old man, however very nice to me. He strongly dissuaded South Kensington for art training, and spoke emphatically on the subject of self-culture.

Our art master Mr Fred Brown, is tremendously clever with the brush ; & exhibits A1 work at the Academy. He seems to have great hopes of me. By the way I shall be going to see Burne Jones soon, & am anxious of course to show him as much new sketching as I can so when you can spare the time you might let me have my pencillings. I hav'nt forgotten the Brighton Souvenirs I promised, I will polish them off as soon as my eyes think fit to improve.

I have just said farewell to Ambler who sails for India immediately. The best place for him I imagine, as he strenuously refused to turn his hand to anything over here.

I have been reading that Book of G Moore's you spoke of "A Mere Accident" I was not wholly pleased with the Same. Realism—so called—does not seem to flourish on British soil

With much love

I am

yr very affectly

AUBREY V BEARDSLEY

[*Postmark 7th December 1891.*]

59 Charlwood  
SW

A W King Esq.  
The Secr  
Technical Schools  
Blackburn

My dear Mr King

I have received the drawings all right. Thanks very much. Its awfully good of you to have the Hamlet in the Bee. Should you ever want any designs for the B, of course I should always be more than delighted to send you any.

The old drawings gave me great hope, as there is a world of difference between them & my present pictures, & only two months difference in point of time.

I am anxious to see how the Hamlet turns out. As it is in very distinct & well defined Black and White, it should reproduce fairly well

Have you E B Jones' Letter  
In haste

I am your

Very affectionate

AUBREY V. BEARDSLEY

59 Charlwood Street  
SW  
Xmas (1891)

My dear Mr King

Of all things received on Xmas morn, none more pleasant than the Bee. On reading your 'notice on the illustration,' I scarcely knew whether I should purchase to myself a laurel wreath & order a statue to be erected immediately in Westminster Abbey; or whether I should bust myself.

Hamlet has certainly been splendidly reproduced, by someone or other, & splendidly introduced by yourself; and for all this I must indeed thank you very very much

The November number of the Bee is in every respect Ar, I can truthfully say that I never see any 'monthly' so well written; certainly a good style—clear & unornate—is the rarest of things, not to be met with even in some of the best newspaper articles.

I shall be glad of a few more copies of the November Bee. so enclosed P O for 1/-.

I should very much like to be able to contribute to the Bee from time to time if I may be allowed.

I am anxious to say something somewhere, on the subject of lines & line drawing. How little the importance of out-line is understood even by some of the best painters. It is this feeling for harmony in line that sets the old masters at such an advantage to the moderns, who seem to think that harmony is colour is the only thing Worth attaining.

Could you reproduce a drawing purely in line?

To wish anyone a happy Xmas is to me very foolish, but I will wish you something which is exactly 365 times better, viz a happy new Year.



In this respect the French are wiser than us, & they feast & present, & wish well, on the 1st of January.

By the way what is your private address, I have quite forgotten.

Hoping that good health etc is yours

I am

Yours very affectionately

AUBREY V BEARDSLEY

P S only send two 'Bees' for November the other 8d. for next 4 Nos.

The old aunt I used to pay so many visits to when at School died about three weeks ago—only left me £500.

[Postcard dated 5th January 1892.]

Dear Mr. Rus  
 After making several  
 designs in transfer ink  
 lithographic ink &  
 lithographic chalk, I  
 think it would be  
 better to etch the  
 picture; & will let  
 you have plate in  
 a few days.

The article had  
 better stand over, as  
 I have just discovered  
<sup>on large display</sup> <sup>one by</sup> Walter Crane in an  
 art Magazine <sup>100</sup> much like my  
<sup>own</sup> <sup>4/3</sup>

59 Charlwood Street,  
S.W.

A. W. King Esq

Dec 9th (1892)

The Secy

Midnight

Blackburn Technical Schools

Blackburn

Lancs

My dear Mr King

So glad to get yr postcard & see yr writing again. I've heaps of news for you so prepare for a budget. I've been horribly ill this year ; & for the first few months of it I had to stop my drawing altogether. In the Spring however I set to work again & struck out an entirely new method of drawing ;— Fantastic impressions treated in the finest possible outline with patches of 'black blot.' A little later on I went to Paris for about 3 weeks. The new work was regarded with no little surprise and enthusiasm by the French artists.

[*Extract from 'Past and Present.'*]

There are not a few who will rejoice to hear of AUBREY V. BEARDSLEY. As illustrator of the 'Pied Piper' his name will be remembered by some to whom he is not known. In the summer some of his work received the very greatest encouragement from the President of the 'Salon des Beaux Arts' in Paris, who introduced Beardsley to one of his brother painters as 'Un jeune artiste Anglais qui fait des choses étonnantes.' He is at present chiefly engaged on illustrations for an edition de luxe of Malory's 'Morte d'Arthur,' but has also in hand drawings for new editions of Hawthorne's Tales, Miss Burney's 'Evelina' and Mackenzie's 'Man of Feeling.' Our readers will join us in congratulations to Beardsley on his successes. May they be the precursors of a long line of brothers!

B G S.

The President as you know is the immortal Puvis de Chavannes I never saw anyone so encouraging as he was.

On coming back to London I knocked off a lot more of the grotesque pictures & went round to the publishers. Dent & Co were the first to give me work. The Morte D'Arthur means a years hard work. I've everything to do for it. Cover, initial letters, headpieces tail pieces, in fact every stroke in the book will be from my pen. I anticipate having to do at least 400 designs all told, & I shall get £200 for them.

I've also got a good many other books in hand for the same publisher in addition to those mentioned in enclosed cutting. I'm now practically on the Staff of a new Art Magazine 'The Studio' about to be published by Lawrence & Bullen. I've four of my weird pictures in the first number & 4 or 5 in the second. No. 1 appears February. There is quite an excitement in the art world here about my 'new method' and I shall be getting some grand notices. Only today Lawrence & Bullen have given me a delightfull (sic) book to illustrate 'Lucians comic voyage' the original of 'Gulliver and all such books.

The Lucian will be the third of a very exquisite set of classics they are bringing out. I dare say you have seen them. The work will consist of about 30 full page illustrations.

I've also had very good offers from Elkin Mathews & Lane & R & R Clarke of Ed'bro, but I dont know how I'm to find time for them all.

Elkin Mathews are very anxious to put me on to the Shaving of Shagpat,' & will do so if they can secure rights from Chapman & Hall. I'd give anything to get the job, in fact I've always set my heart on doing 'Shagpat' the most glorious of books.

I left the fire office about 2 months ago to the great satisfaction of said office & myself. If there ever was a case of the

□ boy in the ○ hole, it was mine. I left the Office & informed my people of the move afterwards. There was (sic) ructions at first but of course now I have achieved something like success and getting talked about they are beginning to hedge and swear they take the greatest interest in my work. This applies however, principally to my revered father.

I'm going to have a grand show of my works at the New English Art Club in the Spring, having been invited to exhibit by Fred Brown the new Slade Professor, a great admirer of mine.

By the way 'The Studio is going to publish a series of articles by those who have special experience in art training, Fred Brown & a lot of others will be contributing. & I have asked my Editor to beg you to send something about the Blackburn technical schools & their scheme of training. I do wish you could manage it.

The Studio will be a monthly affair & price 6d. Sir Fredk. Leighton has a picture in No. 1.

Pray forgive this outrageously egotistical letter, but I thought you would like to know all about my doings. I should like to hear from you at equal length about yours. Are you likely to be in London this Xmas Do come and see me at your earliest opportunity.

Ever yours

AUBREY V BEARDSLEY



[Postcard dated 20th April 1893.]

Dear Ann King

Thanks so much for  
your letter. Let me have  
a longer one. I am so  
glad I have satisfied you.

I will write you soon  
a regular systematic letter  
I've much to tell you  
about. I'm off to  
Paris soon with Oscar  
Wilde. yours

Hubert Beardsley.

[Postmark 27th September 1893.]

114 Cambridge St  
Warwick Sq  
SW.

Dear Mr King

Forgive my long silence.

But really I find writing letters a terrible strain on me now, as my health is very feeble & my work very exacting. Even now I cannot write you the nice long letter I should

Certainly for the moment  
I have fortune at my foot.  
but I can tell I have  
worked & work very  
hard for it. I have  
ompy loads of news  
for you, & mean to  
run down to Blackburn  
for a day or two ere long.  
I have had no rest this  
summer at all & indeed  
fear I shall get none  
this side of Xmas

My Drawings for Salomé  
have aroused great  
excitement & plenty of  
abuse. However I will  
tell you all about these  
things when we meet

If you are thinking of  
getting a copy of Salomé  
order a Large Paper one  
or none at all. The difference  
in the printing of the plates  
will I think be very great  
anxiously looking forward to  
seeing you once more

Yours  
Andres Bernaldez.

[*Postcard dated 27th November 1893*]

114 Cambridge St.  
Warwick Sq. S.W.

A. W. King Esq  
Blackburn Technical Schools,  
Blackburn, Lancs

So sorry to hear of your illness ; & do hope you are quite recovered. I fear I shant have time to come and see you this side of Xmas. If you are in London at that festive season do come & see me. I hardly know which way to turn for work. Will write you good long letter as I have l ts of news. In the meantime hoping to get a few lines about yourself

Ever yours

AUBREY BEARDSLEY



[*Postmark 15th May 1894.*]

114, Cambridge Street  
S.W.

A W King Esq  
Euston Hotel  
East Wing  
Euston Station

Dear King

I was at Empire last night at 3/- lounge  
but saw you not. Do come and dine with us Wednesday  
eve. 7.30. Let me have a line to say if you can come

Yours ever

AUBREY B.

[*Postmark 9th December 1895.*]

10 & 11, St. James's Place,  
S.W.

A. W. King Esq.  
Euston Hotel (East Wing)  
Euston Station  
N.W.

Monday

My dear old friend.

It will be impossible for me to come & see you in the evening as I have a bothering dinner which I cannot throw over. Will you be at your hotel from 6 to 7 by any chance? I could come then. Or would you be in this part of the world (St. James St) in the late afternoon, & be able to take a little tea with me? Of course I would turn up the first thing Wednesday morning if you should be stopping as long as that in town.

The Savoy is quite ready but will not appear till January 4th. I think you will be pleased with it.

With kindest regards

Yours very affectionately

AUBREY BEARDSLEY

What a year it's been !

Muriel,  
Exeter Rd.  
Bournemouth

Thursday (March 18th, 1897)

My dear King

I was so very glad to get a note from you. I have indeed been seriously ill for the last year, & all work more or less put a stop to. With the approach of spring I am beginning to regain strength and spirits, & to take up my pens pencils & brushes once more. I shall stay here most probably for another six weeks or two months, & then to France! How much I should like to see you again, but going northwards will be an impossible programme for me nowadays. Why not spend a few days of your holidays with me in Dieppe where I shall be staying in the summer? Would that be possible.

Forgive a skimpy note, I will write to you soon a much more satisfactory letter.

My mother sends her kindest regards to you.

I am ever yours

AUBREY BEARDSLEY

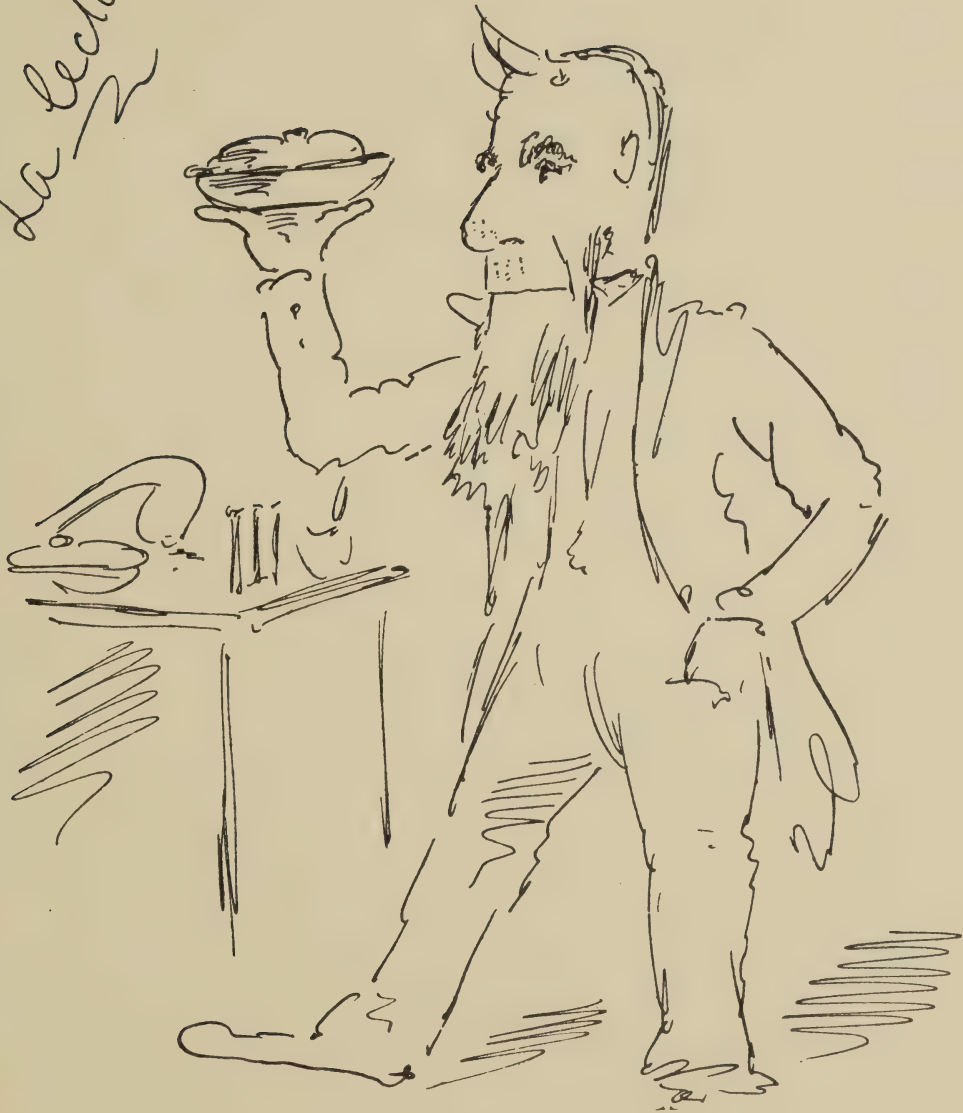
Dear friends  
 I will now  
 address to you  
 a few words  
 concerning  
 La apple  
 (Great applause)  
 Hear hear  
 Encore;







La lecture



glavowing  
the apple  
laid





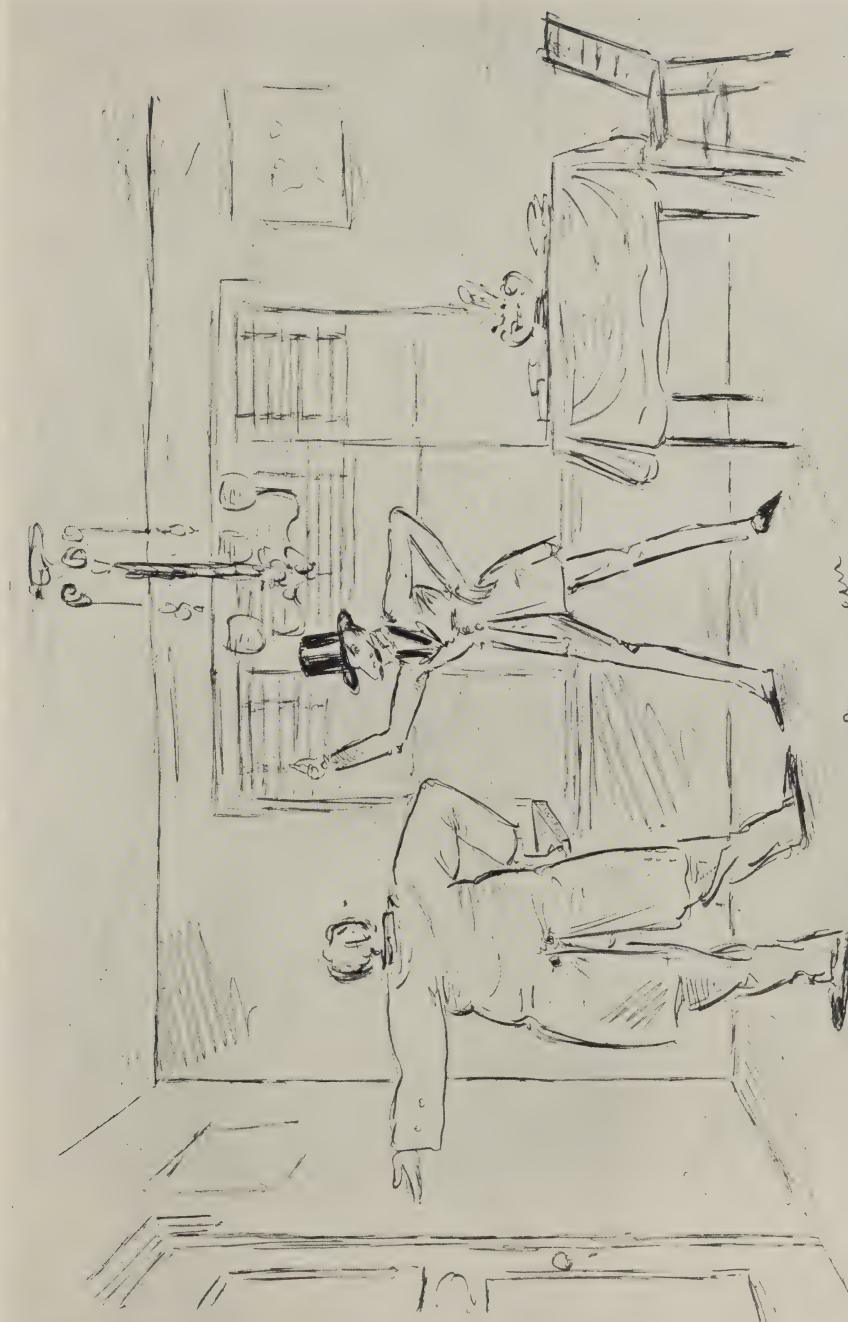


a little chamber  
music



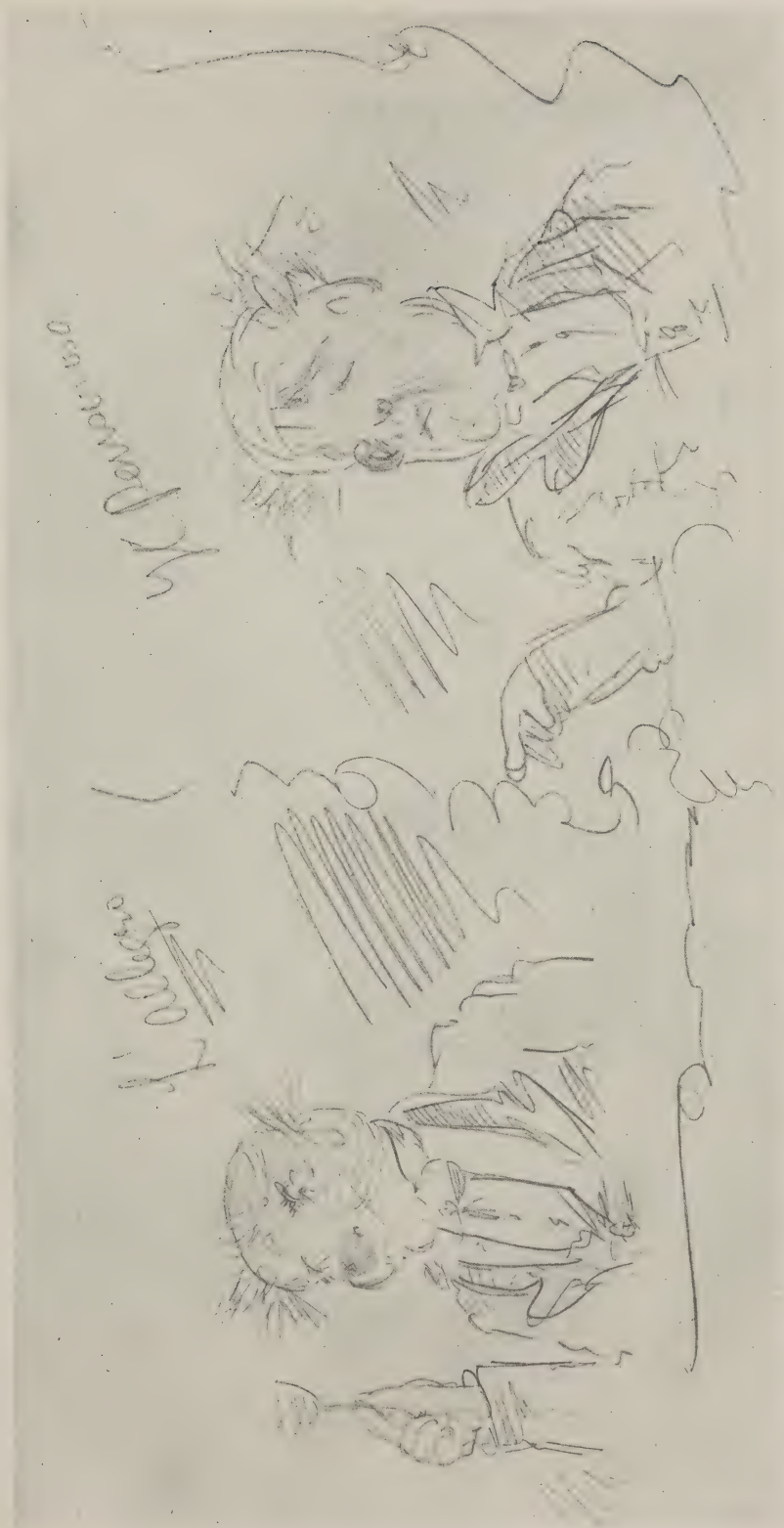






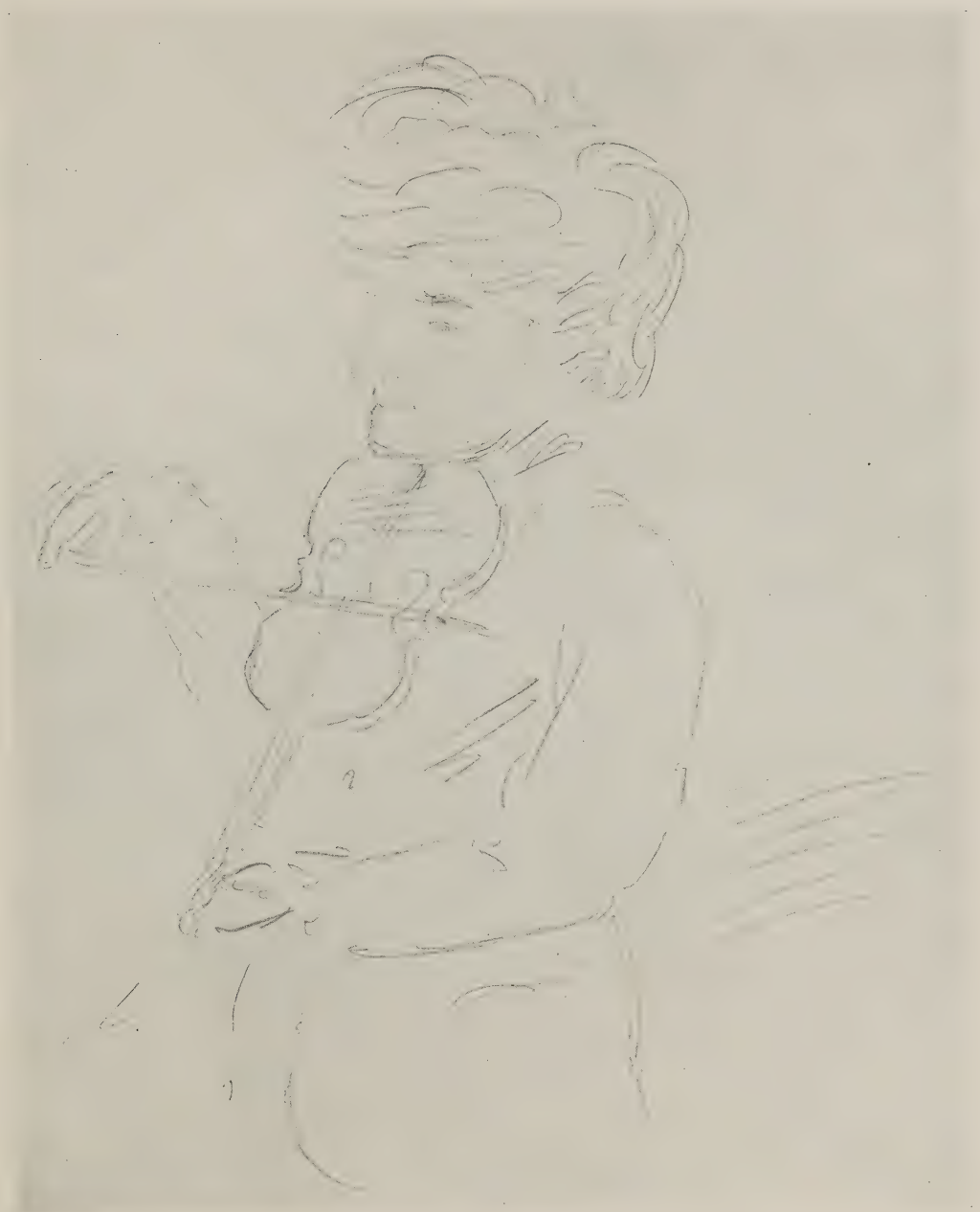
(victa) moner maduone  
 de les tout mon veet  
 de par que mon veet  
 de par que mon veet



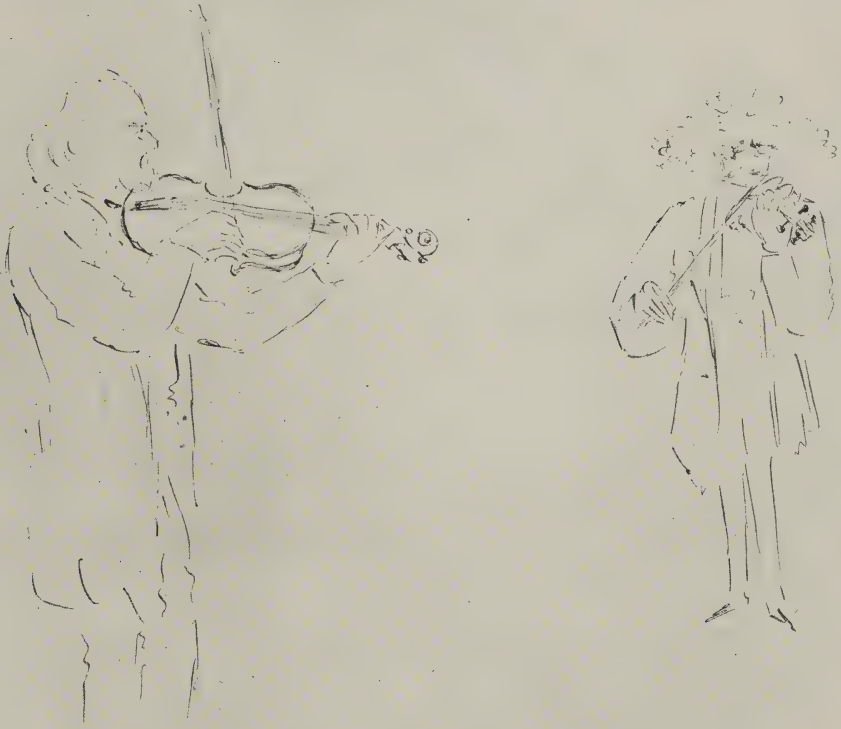


































ow



